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Growing Up with the Troubles
Reading and Negotiating Space

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> Given the vicissitudes of the human drama, it is a wonder that anyone is left physically or psychologically healthy
>
> —S.E. Hobfoll, 'Alone Together'

Introduction

It was the mid-seventies and I was about eight years old. We were setting out on our annual summer holiday adventure and on this occasion circumstances dictated that we travel through Derry. As this was our first visit, our only knowledge of the city was based on the regular radio and television news reports, which portrayed a place of violence and danger, of sectarian attacks, paramilitary shootings and bombings, and a heavy military presence. If my mother had considered our neighbouring city, Belfast, a dangerous war-torn disaster zone, Derry was by comparison akin to her view of Armageddon. As such she was anxious and had instructed us not to attract any unnecessary attention to our car. This included instructions not to 'mess about' or make any abrupt movements (which could be misinterpreted by either the security forces or paramilitaries as someone pulling a gun on them), and if we were stopped by either the security forces or paramilitaries we were not to say anything, not to smile and not to stare. Overwhelmed by trying to absorb this array of instructions and with concerns for our certain impending death, I decided to hide in the

back footwell of the car. As we entered the city we were stopped at an army checkpoint. My father wound down his window. A soldier enquired as to the nature of our journey, as normal procedure required. At this point I had to come out of hiding so that he (the soldier) could check the passengers to validate our story – again normal procedure. I remember looking around at this strange landscape: large concrete blocks, corrugated iron and barbed wire; buildings and walls scrawled with graffiti; soldiers in padded, mottled uniforms crouched down as far as my eyes could see with their rifles pointed at our car. For the first time (that I can remember) in my life, I felt fear, a feeling deep down in my stomach. I didn't know what to do. As we left the checkpoint, I resumed my hiding place until we had safely reached our holiday destination.

I would consider myself to have lived a normal childhood albeit under the rather abnormal circumstances of the Troubles.[1] Although there have been many studies on the impact of the Troubles on children and young people,[2] the majority of these studies have focused on the psychological and behavioural consequences of the conflict.[3] Few studies have focused on the process, and therefore on how children experienced the Troubles, how they made sense of their world, the emotions they felt, and how they learned to cope with the mundane and the not-so-mundane aspects of growing up in the shadow of violence. In the opening vignette I presented a rather mundane aspect of everyday life, a car journey. However, in the context of a region engulfed in an intra-state conflict, even the ordinary can suddenly become the unexpected. Road blocks preventing access through planned routes were a common feature of car journeys and often led to unanticipated diversions through unknown spaces. On this occasion we found ourselves travelling through this notorious and yet unfamiliar city.

Much of the research in Northern Ireland focuses on dangerous spaces based on objective quantifiable data (such as the number of incidents), with less on subjective assessments based on perceptions of fear (Lysaght 2005). Space in Northern Ireland is highly politicized, rooted in centuries of historical events that have shaped and reshaped the religious, historical and cultural schisms that underpinned the conflict (Darby 1995). Space elicits emotional reactions and has the potential to be simultaneously appraised as safe or dangerous, depending on who[4] controls and who is negotiating the space (Feldman 1991; Lysaght and Basten 2003; Lysaght 2005). Based on objective measures of danger, we were travelling through a dangerous space. However, as a young child I was not aware of 'fatal incident' or 'number of death' statistics, and based on these same statistics objectively I had travelled through a more dangerous space as I regularly enjoyed shopping trips to Belfast.[5] My fear was not the result of my understanding of such objective information but rather the result of my subjective appraisal[6] founded on what I already knew about Derry and my evolving lived experience of the city.

My appraisal of danger was in part influenced by my parents' anxiety.[7] Derry (Londonderry)[8] was renowned for being a deeply segregated city.[9] In these segregated urban spaces, communities developed highly localized mental topographies[10] of safe and dangerous spaces, and a range of spatial codifying practices[11] and spatial norms[12] of behaviours to enable their 'daily flows' (Lysaght 2005) and movement through them (Feldman 1991; Lysaght and Basten 2003). As we had never visited Derry, we had no knowledge of the local topography and therefore did not know which areas were safe and which were not.[13] Additionally, Derry was portrayed by the media as a dangerous place, and I had observed many reports of shootings, bombings, riots, rubber bullets and violence.[14] Certain events, specifically those involving multiple deaths, had a significant impact throughout the region and became 'grievous punctuations in the collective memory of the Troubles' (Smyth and Hamilton 2003: 15). The city bore the legacy of Bloody Sunday[15] and was therefore 'tagged' (Lysaght and Basten 2003) as a 'dangerous place'. Yet I was a frequent visitor to my local city, Belfast, which was equally portrayed by the media as a 'warzone' and also bore the legacy of significant incidents such as Bloody Friday.[16] Yet I considered Belfast to be an exciting and safe place rather than a dangerous place, as I had experienced Belfast, and I knew how it felt. Belfast was familiar and had fanciful shops, pretty colours and special treats. I had no such prior lived experience of Derry and, therefore, no happy memories of shopping trips or treats – only my anxious anticipation as to what I might encounter.[17]

My assessment of 'danger' was also influenced by my emerging feel for this city, based primarily on the negative visual images I was absorbing. Visual codifying practices such as kerbstone painting, murals, parades and graffiti have become part of the demarcation of space, and which serve as explicit identity cues as to which group controls that space (Lysaght and Basten 2003; Zurawski 2005; Goeke-Morey et al. 2009). I had encountered graffiti and barricades before, but in familiar surrounding where I knew what they represented. In these new and unfamiliar surroundings, I was unsure how to interpret their significance. Although some codifying practices were universal in their message (for example, red-white-and-blue painted kerbstones or the red hand of Ulster flags), their interpretation was highly influenced by where, when and how they were used. Visual displays therefore simultaneously serve as a salutation to those of the same group, as a warning to those of the other group (Zurawski 2005), or as a means of antagonizing the other group through reinforcing difference and distinctiveness (Jarman 1999; Trew 2004). All I knew was that Derry felt wrong, and so I distanced myself from it by hiding.[18]

Lysaght (2005) notes that knowing what to fear is crucial to experiencing fear, and as such, fear is not an irrational or uncontrollable emotion but rather a learned response to information cues. As a young child I learned to 'read space', an embodied and multi-sensory appraisal of information cues, in order to assess my situation as normal or abnormal, as safe or

dangerous. This process involved drawing on a myriad of information sources including visual cues, media sources, and parental guidance. In the opening vignette I provided a snapshot of this process – a process I will further explore in this chapter. I discuss how I learned to 'read space', how appraisal influenced my coping behaviours and routines in my daily negotiation of space, and how my appraisals and behaviours changed with context and developed over time.

Much research on the Troubles has relied on traditional methods, and there is value to adopting a wider range of conceptual perspectives, research methods and methods of data analyses (Muldoon 2004). In this chapter, I present my autoethnographic account of growing up during the Troubles. Autoethnography uses personal experiences to purposefully reflect on the self within a sociocultural context (Coffey 1999) and is therefore an effective approach for gaining a deep insight into sociocultural phenomena through reflection and analysis of one's personal experiences of those phenomena (Reed-Danahay 1997).[19] In reflecting on past experiences, it is important not to equate memory with history and fact (Cappelletto 2003; Kirmayer 1996). Autoethnography seeks to 'extract meaning from experience rather than to depict experience exactly as it was lived' (Bochner 2000: 270). In painting a picture of one's life, there is no one true picture but rather multiple images and traces of events (Denzin 2014). This chapter is not an event history of the Troubles. I make no claim that what I present is a historically accurate recall of events; but neither is this an act of fiction embellished with fictional characters and dramatized emotions. None of the details have been purposely changed for dramatic effect. However, they are presented from my perspective and I acknowledge that my recall may be hazy and also contested.[20] Simply, these are my memories of selected events,[21] as I remember them.

My Narrative

My Childhood (circa 1966–1977)

I was baptized and raised a Catholic, and the church faith was embedded within our family beliefs and rituals. We did not, however, consider ourselves to be either Irish or nationalist; my parents demonstrated no allegiance to the Republic of Ireland or to any of the nationalist political parties or republican paramilitary organizations, and they instilled tolerance and moderation as core values of our beliefs. I was born and grew up in the town of Lisburn,[22] on the outskirts of Belfast. Lisburn was a predominantly Protestant town but, unlike Belfast or Derry, it had few segregated residential districts, and as such, both communities had to coexist on a daily basis in order for normal life to function. Visual symbols and rituals were prominent throughout the town and they reflected the town's unionist affiliation. In the town centre, union flags and the red hand

of Ulster flags flew from lampposts and shop and bar facades. In the more loyalist residential areas, the kerbstones and lampposts were painted red, white and blue, and union flags and the red hand of Ulster flags flew from lampposts and houses. In the mixed residential areas, the displays were less prominent, with the odd flag dotted in the landscape. We lived in such an area. However, as marching season approached, the visual displays increased, and union flag bunting decorated the town centre, flags adorned all of the lampposts in and out of the town, and the residential landscape became more decorated with flags. These visual symbols were a vital cue as they provided a very blatant indicator of the community membership, and its affiliation to that space. As we were part of the minority community in the town, we avoided the predominantly loyalist housing estates and stuck to the integrated residential and communal areas. As most children in Northern Ireland, I attended a segregated school. This segregation made us easy targets for sectarian attacks. On a number of occasions, we arrived to broken windows, petrol-bombed classrooms or sectarian graffiti. On one occasion one of our classmates arrived at school and we were informed that his family had been burned out of their home the previous evening. He stood before us in the only clothes he had left, and we were asked to gather whatever spare clothes we had at home so that they could be passed onto his family.

In addition to the local community spaces, our town garrisoned the British army headquarters in Northern Ireland during the Troubles. The barracks was heavily fortified with corrugated-iron fencing and barbed wire, and access into and movement around the barracks was monitored and restricted, with security cameras, armed observation posts and vehicular ramps. The sky was filled by a seemingly constant clack of all manner of helicopters, which flew in and out of the army camp. They hovered and circled low in the sky and the sound was deafening. As a child they terrified me, and on hearing them I wanted to run and hide, although I knew that this was not an appropriate course of action as it would arouse their suspicion and could lead to me being shot at. The security forces were highly visible in the town and it was common to see them patrolling either on foot or in armoured vehicles. Once when I was in the car with my mother and father, we ended up driving behind an army patrol vehicle. It was usual for the soldiers to sit in the back, looking out with their guns visible. As we bumped over each pothole in the road, my mother became more agitated, eventually asking my father to pull over. As he did so rather reluctantly, she explained that she had feared that one of the guns would go off and therefore she could not rest until they were out of sight. Therefore, although I was taught no hatred of the armed forces, I came to associate their presence with danger. Although they routinely patrolled the town, I knew not to go too close to them, but I also knew not to run from them or hide from them. Over time I came to recognize what was considered to be a 'normal' or 'abnormal' level of security presence in the town, and

therefore what signified routine monitoring and surveillance as opposed to the increased security routines associated with imminent security threats. I learned to differentiate the different sounds associated with the different styles of helicopter and armoured vehicle, which provided a clue to the purpose of their presence and as such the climate of the town.

After a number of bomb attacks in the early 1970s, much of the town centre became a controlled zone with restricted vehicular access. As such, although it was normal to see parked cars in the residential areas, the sight of a parked car in the town centre, near the police station or other public building, was sinister and foreboding. The larger shops conducted security searches on entering, to protect their stores from incendiary attacks and it was normal practice to have both bag and body searches on a routine shopping trip. I remember seeing one of the major stores after an attack. My senses were flooded with the destruction: the black charred remains of what were once colourful toys and trinkets; the sound of water cascading through the ceiling and down the walls; and I can still recall the rancid stench that saturated the air.

I also went on regular shopping trips to Belfast and I looked forward to visiting the large department stores with their fanciful window dressings and the Aladdin's cave of all manner of glittering treasures. I often had tea and cake or fish and chips as an additional treat. However, the city centre was often a target for bombers, and no latitude was granted for Saturday afternoon shoppers. Often a series of scares about devices would be announced or even detonated at the same time to maximize chaos and panic. One afternoon we encountered this, for as we were evacuated from one area we were moved in the direction of an explosion. My senses were overwhelmed: the dull thud; the shattering glass propelling through the air then crashing to the ground; the screaming and shouting; and the sight of helpless policemen and shoppers trying to figure out what to do in all this chaos. For a moment my world stopped before I was jolted back to reality. I was uninjured, but the encounter left its mark, and Belfast excursions became less frequent and eventually stopped.

We also experienced the aftermath of such attacks closer to home as we lived opposite the main hotel in the town, which became a target for bombers. Often a flurry of activity would suddenly ensue in the street outside, followed by a stern knock on the front door, which signalled the order to evacuate our home, or, alternatively to open the windows, close the curtains, and hide out until the 'all clear' was given. As a small child this was all strangely sinister and strangely fascinating at the same time, and I remember frequently peeking from behind the curtains to watch the commotion outside. On one occasion, I could not resist the temptation to watch the little 'robot' defuse the bomb. However, my intrigue was met with castigation from the soldiers to get away from the window and back to safety. Many evacuations turned out to be hoaxes, but the events, hoax or real, left their mark on our home. Our house was damaged a number of

times. The front window in our 'good room' (the room kept tidy from the clutter of family life to be enjoyed only by visitors) faced out onto the front of the hotel, and it was in this room that my mother displayed her finest ornaments including a large figurine of a shepherd boy, which sat in the window. As a child it became a fascination that despite our windows rarely surviving a bomb, miraculously, this figurine did. One early evening while cooking dinner, we got the knock to evacuate. It turned out to be a hoax, but we returned home to a rather smoke-damaged kitchen realizing that, in our hurry to leave, we had forgotten to turn off the stove. Over time this surge of pre-evacuation activity and that stern knock became recognizable, and we instantaneously knew the routine.

Even when not physically close to the conflict, radio and television news reports brought us regular updates from around the province. In an age before mass electronic communications and mobile phones, this was our only source of timely information. The radio was switched on first thing in the morning and the television news was the last programme before bedtime. The political climate could change quite rapidly, and the news provided practical information on road blocks, diversions, and temporary 'no-go' areas. In addition, we had daily and weekly local newspapers which brought us more detailed stories and images from around the region. As a child I was surrounded by news and images of the Troubles, and as the conflict intensified I came to understand the violence as part of everyday life. I remember one time as I played with my Cindy dolls, my mother queried why I had pulled off their arms and legs. My response was that they had been in a bomb. My mother was appalled, and I was duly chastised, but I could not understand what I had done wrong.

Once a year, we would depart our home town and head for the Republic of Ireland on holiday. Although my father had a good knowledge of the routes and roads in Northern Ireland, this annual event inevitably meant we had to travel through 'bandit country' (the colloquial term given to the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland). Our trips to the Republic highlighted that although we should be experiencing a sense of Catholic solidarity and therefore 'in-group' status, this was not the case. Speaking with a Northern Irish accent and driving a car with a Northern Irish registration plate, we were often victims of suspicion and discrimination. There seemed to be little empathy in the Republic for the situation in the North, and an overwhelming assumption that everyone from the North was a terrorist, paramilitary, thug, or all of the above.

As a child, I was mainly accompanied on my journeys by my parents or my siblings, and as such I relied on them to keep me safe and tell me what to do. The only journey I was allowed to undertake alone was the one to and from school. I knew I had to stick to the prescribed route and follow my mother's warnings: 'don't go near any parked cars' (they had a tendency to blow up); 'don't get too close to the soldiers' (they might shoot you); 'don't get too close to the police' (you might get caught in the crossfire); 'don't pick

anything up' (it might explode); 'don't talk to anyone' (information can be used to hurt you). The purpose of this 'rule book' was to ensure that I could travel unnoticed through the shared routes and, de facto, without harm. I not only knew that I had to follow the rules, but also the importance of following them. I was aware, even from a very young age, that this was not a game. Following the rules was not optional. It was the difference between life and death.

My Adolescence (circa 1978–1985)

In 1978 my small world expanded as I started grammar school. The school was about five miles away from our home in the direction of Belfast, and so rather than walking to school, I now had to catch a bus. As our school had a large catchment area I was now part of a wider Catholic community that existed outside of Lisburn. As a child I had been quietly navigating through space unnoticed, however I now travelled as part of a pack and there was less emphasis on being invisible as our identity was overtly displayed by our school uniform. Our school was sandwiched between other Protestant schools and there were regular skirmishes as the pupils all collided at lunchtime and home time at the small series of shops and cafes that serviced the area. These encounters were generally verbal rather than physical, consisting of sectarian name calling or chanting. However, after a number of more serious incidents, the school changed the start and finish times and restricted movements at lunchtime. Similar changes had to be implemented whenever the violence escalated in the region or there was a major event. I remember during the hunger strike when tensions were extremely bitter. We were advised by our headteacher to take an alternative route to school through more neutral areas, and to come to school in 'civvies'. I remember a bus journey characterized by that terrible feeling deep down in my gut that I had not experienced for a long time – fear. However, once inside the school gates, these feelings disappeared. I was safe, and we debated our fashion choices for that day without actually discussing the reason why we were all wearing our ordinary clothes. Ironically however, in an attempt to make us 'invisible' (through not wearing our uniform) and protect us from attack, we simultaneously became 'visible' as the only young people in the area not wearing a school uniform.

Once safely inside the school gates we were generally protected from any events taking place outside. Sometimes it felt like school provided a 'stopwatch' to the Troubles, where every day I learned new and interesting things, where I could laugh and play, act the fool, and be a teenager. However, one day while sitting in class there was the recognizable dull thud and the windows shook. We knew that the bomb was either very close, or a very large bomb somewhere further afield. When the school day ended, I caught my usual bus home. As I travelled closer to my home I recognized the signs that something was not right. As I walked to my home the full

extent of the earlier bomb blast became apparent. I felt sick. The hotel stood in ruins and our house had been badly damaged. Shattered glass and displaced roof tiles lay scattered across the front garden. My mother sat in our 'good room', accompanied by an official who was completing compensation forms. My mother was visibly shaken as she sat in this normally pristine room now littered with shattered glass and broken ornaments, including her prized shepherd boy.

As a teenager I was becoming more aware of the violence and of the deep divisions that permeated my society. I also started to develop an awareness of intra-group differences. Grammar school was my first encounter with wealthy Catholics whose parents had professional jobs and who lived in the affluent areas that were generally devoid of the union bunting and painted kerbstones I was accustomed to in my town. This was also the first time I had encountered people from the segregated Catholic areas. One time I arranged to meet a friend who lived in West Belfast. This visit highlighted that being Catholic was only one dimension of identity, and to fit into this environment I would also have to be a republican, and therefore I felt anxious and intimidated by this space.

In my teens, my world was expanding as family holidays were no longer 'at home' but abroad, and school trips also took us to exciting European cities. This gave me an insight into how outsiders viewed Northern Ireland. During a Christmas shopping trip to London, I had purchased a lovely gift for my mother from a well-known department store, which they had expertly wrapped as an added charm. At the airport we were herded from one security check to the next, and I watched resentfully as the security staff unwrapped my present so that they could look inside. The media portrayal of the Troubles was farreaching, and we were constantly reminded – regardless of which European city we were visiting – that we were from a warzone. There was an implicit (and at times more explicit) view that those from Northern Ireland were aggressive war mongers and terrorists. I wanted to shout out 'we are just normal people', but inside I quietly started to wish that I lived in a more 'normal' society.

My Early Adulthood (circa 1985–1989)

In 1985, I went to Queen's University in Belfast to study social anthropology. I now had the opportunity to widen my pool of friends and develop friendships with exciting and interesting new people, not only from across Northern Ireland but from all over the world. However, this was an aspect of my environment that I was finding increasingly difficult to master. One relationship with a Protestant boy who came from a segregated area in Belfast resulted in break up after he was threatened by 'sanctuary' protectors from his local community.[23] A second relationship also hit rough ground as my Protestant partner struggled to differentiate between being a Catholic and being an IRA sympathizer. I was the former but certainly not

the latter. However, any time there was a major event he would blur these identities into one. Throughout the Troubles there were periods of fraught violence and anxiety and periods of relative calm, and the political climate had a knock-on impact on interactions with others.

During this period, my family moved house to a location on the security perimeter of the army headquarters. There was a heavy army presence in this area and it was not uncommon to find myself confronted by a camouflaged soldier hiding out in the garden. As a child I had never thought of the security forces as ordinary people; however, as a young woman coming face-to-face with them in such close proximity, it led to a number of awkward encounters. Should I say hello? Should I pretend I had not noticed them? Our new location had resulted in us being sandwiched between loyalist and nationalist families. One night I was woken by that recognizable flurry of activity. The nationalist family had been petrol bombed and they suspected their loyalist neighbours, which led to a period of fraught relationships. This event left me feeling very anxious. What if it had been our loyalist neighbours? Would we be their next targets? This led to a period of intense night-time 'cat napping' and eventually to insomnia. I would sleep when I came home from university and sit up at night, watching and listening, just in case. After a while, I started to stay with friends at Queen's rather than come home.

Whilst studying at university, I secured a summer job at the army headquarters. I now had the opportunity to negotiate this restricted space behind the barricades. This experience brought me into regular contact with soldiers and I came to realize that underneath the weaponry, the uniform and the 'cam cream', they were not that intimidating. They were just people and I began to appreciate that fear was not one dimensional. It was not just the civilians who experienced fear, but also the security forces. I also came to realize that many of these young men had not joined the armed forces because of their ideological values and beliefs but rather because they came from deprived areas and they needed a job. At a department party I met someone special. Having experienced the bitterness and frustration of inter-group romantic relationships between Protestant and Catholic, I found his attitude refreshing. As he was stationed near the border, our contact was intermittent. My commute to visit him involved three bus journeys, with the landscape changing from red-white-and-blue to green-white-and-orange a number of times along the way. His commute to visit me involved using the army bus, which made regular exchanges between the various army camps. Often our visits were cancelled when the journey was considered too dangerous. After a short period, he decided to leave the army and we decided to get married. The week after he made his final journey on the army bus to start his new life as a civilian in Lisburn, the army bus was bombed resulting in multiple deaths. I started to realize that living in Northern Ireland was akin to a cat having nine lives – and I reflected on how many I had used and how many I had left.

As I started to think about the future, about raising a family, about pursuing a career, I became more and more despondent. I was tired of the politics, of the daily spatial manoeuvres and rituals, of the obscene graffiti, and of the hatred. One day we were shopping in a local supermarket when the coin mechanism from our trolley broke and flew into the air, resembling an impressive 'whirring' sound. We both instantly dropped to the floor much to the amusement of the other shoppers. This seemingly insignificant incident dramatically brought my vulnerability into focus, a vulnerability to which I had been exposed every day of my life up to this point, but I was now aware that my appraisal of everyday life was starting to change. As time went by, I could no longer imagine living a 'normal' life in Northern Ireland as the very real abnormality of that life was coming sharply into focus. I felt that I could no longer cope with the stress of living in such a volatile and hostile environment – my coping reserves were empty. Within a few weeks of the supermarket incident, we had secured jobs in England and relocated.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have presented my own personal experience of growing up during the Troubles. In particular I have explored the factors that influence the appraisal of situations as safe or dangerous, and the resulting coping responses adopted to carry on with a 'normal' life amidst the conflict. Lazarus (1991:151) posits that 'much in life is a restatement of past struggles'. Consequently, throughout our lives we will encounter similar situations and we develop a generalized approach to appraising the significance and meaning of these encounters. As such, we only require the appropriate cue to trigger this meaning. As a child, I quickly learned to recognize the surge of activity that accompanied a threatening event; when a parked car symbolized a threat and when it was just a parked car; when a noise outside was just a noise and when it was more sinister. This multi-sensory appraisal enabled a quick and decisive reaction, and minimized the potential for harm. To enable day-to-day life to function, a series of spatial practices were observed (Lysaght 2005). This unwritten 'rulebook' (Lysaght and Basten 2003) provided guidance on how to navigate safely through shared or unfamiliar places. This rule book was initially informed by my parents, and through their guidance I learned to use a variety of spatial tactics to maintain my day-to-day well-being. These included travelling quietly through shared spaces to limit unnecessary attention, sticking to known 'safe' routes and staying clear of 'no-go' areas, avoiding contact with the security forces in case I got caught in the crossfire, and not engaging in conversations with strangers.

While emphasizing the everyday activities of life, 'it is important not to create a false sense of normality' (Lysaght 2005:128). The political climate in Northern Ireland provided 'an all-embracing atmosphere' (Lysaght and

Basten 2003:238), which influenced spatial tactics. As such, the 'rule book' was not fixed, and during times of political tension – such as marching season or the aftermath of an incident – tactics had to be changed. These rules were not irrational, and I knew this was not a game. The rules were there to keep me safe. My childhood was set in the context of the most intensely violent period of the Troubles (Smyth and Hamilton 2003), and the threats were very 'real', with civilians accounting for the largest share of recorded injuries and deaths as a result of the troubles (ibid.). It is only now as an adult with my own child that I can reflect on how my mother must have felt waving her husband and children off each morning and hoping that they would all return home again unharmed.

The Troubles provided many 'traumatic punctuations' (Smyth 1998:13) to my 'normal' life. In particular, attacks on my 'sanctuaries' (my home, my school, my family) and 'lucky escapes' were poignant reminders of the volatility of my situation. At times I felt overwhelmed, and I engaged in a range of coping strategies to keep going. Cairns (1996: 55) emphasizes that coping is not the same as 'mastery over the environment' – as in the context of political violence, there is much that cannot be mastered. At times I normalized my environment (my game with my Cindy dolls) and at times I distanced myself from my surroundings (by hiding in the footwell of the car or engaging in frivolous conversations at school). As I developed into a young adult my assessment of my environment changed and I increasingly started to 'misread' encounters as dangerous when they were routine. Lazarus (1991) warns that generalized patterns of appraisal can transcend the specifics of an encounter and therefore trigger inappropriate or exaggerated emotional reactions. Cairns (1996) too, speculated that being predisposed to specific events in childhood could have long-term impacts if these events are encountered again in adulthood. After twenty-two years of living with the 'constant drip of the Troubles' (Cairns nd, cited in Roe et al. 2014), I had had enough. Lazarus (1999) highlights that appraisal involves an assessment of what can be done to improve a situation and whether or not things are likely to change. As a young adult, I started to realize that things would not change. The cumulative emotional and physical impact of living with conflict had depleted my coping resources, and so I joined the many young people of Northern Ireland who contributed to the brain drain of the region as a result of the Troubles (Dunn 1995).

Due to the longevity of the conflict, the Troubles permeated my entire childhood and early adulthood, and residues of this experience still impact my life today. Like a motion picture, emotional experiences proceed continuously over time (Lazarus 1999) and therefore it may be many years before impact becomes apparent (Cairns 1996; Smyth 1998). Lazarus (1991) highlights that although personal narratives provide an interesting insight into how individuals appraise and cope with life's struggles, we also need to make comparisons with others. Smyth (1998: 13) highlights that

few adults in Northern Ireland have lived in relative peace, as 'for those of us who grew up here, and who are in [our]forties [or]younger, the Troubles [have]provided the societal context – and often traumatic punctuation and turning points – to our lives as children and adults'. Moving forward there is a need to capture the experiences of other 'ordinary people' who, like me, grew up in the shadow of the Troubles. We know little of the long-term impact of the Troubles (Cairns 1996; Smyth 1998), and yet understanding this impact is an important area for social research so that we can better understand conflict and build peaceful more societies (Muldoon 2004; Cummings et al. 2013).

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Notes

1. 'The Troubles' are generally considered to have lasted from 1969 with civil unrest and the subsequent mobilization of troops to Northern Ireland to restore order (Dunn 1995) until the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 (Muldoon 2004). During this period, over 3,700 people were killed (Hargie, Dickson and Nelson 2003) and over 40, 000 were injured (Smyth and Hamilton 2003). Smyth (1998) highlights that although the term 'the Troubles' may seem to understate the scale and severity of the conflict, it has nonetheless become the accepted term for the conflict.
2. For reviews, see Cairns 1987; Cairns and Cairns 1995; Cairns 1996; Smyth 1998; Hargie, Dickson and Nelson 2003; the 2004 special issues of the *Journal of Social Issues*; and the 2014 special issue of the journal *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*on the life and work of Ed Cairns.
3. These studies have revealed rather conflicting views, which researchers suggest may be due to a variety of conceptual, methodological and ethical issues inherent in the studies that were undertaken. See Mazzetti (2015) for a review of these issues.
4. Hargie, Dickson and Nelson (2003:11) note that the two protagonists of the conflict are generally referred to as the 'Nationalist/Catholic community, which seeks unity with the Republic of Ireland and separation from the United Kingdom' and the 'Unionist/Protestant community, which has the diametrically opposite perspective of supporting the link with the rest of the United Kingdom and opposing unity with the Republic of Ireland'. Despite the complexity of factors influencing the conflict, Murray (1983: 216) suggests that the terms 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' provide convenient, although often misleading, 'labels under which the conflict can be compartmentalised.'
5. See Smyth and Hamilton (2003) for a review of incident statistics by geographical location.

6. Cairns (1996) suggests that we know little about the information sources used by children in their appraisal of events, but he suggests possible sources may include parents (particularly the mother) and the media.
7. Fraser (1973), a child psychiatrist working in Belfast during the Troubles, highlights that the fears expressed by the children referred to him reflected the fears expressed by the children's parents at home. Smyth (1998) suggests that the culture of secrecy that permeated the region resulted in families not openly discussing their experiences or fears. She posits therefore that parents often failed to provide children with the information they needed to understand what was happening in their environment. She suggests that this led to children filling the gaps in their understanding with fantasies that were often worse than reality. Although conducted post-Troubles, in their research of mother–child dyads, Merrilees et al. (2014) found that mothers who are more affected by violence tend to have lower levels of psychological well-being, which in turn is associated with maladjustments in their children.
8. Hereafter referred to as Derry.
9. Although residential segregation predates the Troubles, the escalation of sectarian violence in the early 1970s resulted in large-scale population displacement and relocation, particularly in the cities of Belfast and Derry (Darby 1995; Smyth 1998; Lysaght and Basten 2003).
10. Feldman (1991) posits that a physical and ideological continuum of space evolved in these segregated urban spaces as 'mental maps' to enable the local communities to cope with their spatial interactions. He suggests that this continuum comprised the inner 'sanctuary' which was made up of one homogenous group, an area of 'barricades' to physically protect the sanctuary from attack by the other side, and a series of contested and adversarial 'interfaces' in the spaces that existed between the two community groups.
11. Jarman (1999) highlights how rituals and practices are used in Northern Ireland to symbolize the deeply embedded beliefs and assumptions of the distinct identities.
12. Lysaght and Basten (2003) note that communities developed localized 'unwritten rule books' that prescribed the appropriate behaviour for moving through space. This included staying clear of hostile 'no-go' areas and therefore avoiding conflict; varying the route taken to reduce predictability of movement and therefore reduce the risk of attack; removing or covering any visible symbols of identity such as school uniform to avoid being recognized as a member of the other group; and limiting the disclosure of personal information, such as names, which could disclose community identity. As religious identity was embedded into every aspect of life, it was possible through the process of telling to determine someone's group affiliation by using a series of institutionalized cues learned in childhood –for example, asking someone their forename or surname, which school they last attended, where they lived, which sports they played, etc. (Gallagher 2004; Trew 2004).
13. Smyth (1998) notes that although residential segregation made communities feel safe (because they were living amongst their own), paradoxically it also made the groups more vulnerable as they became marginalized into community enclaves and therefore easily identifiable as 'sitting targets' by the other community. As the number of 'tit-for-tat' attacks escalated, a culture of 'conspiracy consciousness' and suspicion of the 'other side' developed (Boal and Douglas 1982), and Feldman (1991) notes that access to the 'sanctuary' became vehemently protected and restricted. Zurawski (2005) suggests that the communities engaged in active surveillance, with people watching to monitor who travelled through their space, as it became increasingly important to know who everyone was and to which group they belonged.
14. Cairns (1996) highlights that even children who lived in relatively peaceful areas and therefore were not directly exposed to violence had nonetheless acquired detailed information about the conflict from media sources.

15. Bloody Sunday: 30 January 1972. During a civil rights march in Derry, 14 were shot dead by the British Parachute Regiment (Dixon and O'Kane 2011).
16. Bloody Friday: 21 July 1972. The Provisional IRA set off twenty-six bombs in Belfast, killing 11 and injuring 130 (Dixon and O'Kane 2011).
17. Cairns (1996:51) highlights that children may suffer from 'anticipation neurosis'; consequently, children do not have to directly encounter violence to be affected by it.
18. Studies of coping have highlighted that children adopt a variety of strategies such as denial, distancing and an avoidance of thinking about the situation (Cairns 1996; Smyth 1998), and anideologically based active engagement with the political violence (Cairns 1996; Gallagher 2004).
19. This biographical nature of investigation has led to criticisms that autoethnography can be too focused on the self, rendering the technique narcissistic, self-indulgent and 'non-scientific' (Denzin 2014). However self-exposure without an analysis of the broader sociocultural context results in a memoire, a journal entry, but not ethnography (Ellis 2004; Chang 2008). In order to make a scholarly contribution, it is not enough simply to tell an evocative story; we need to reflect on the personal experiences within the context of broader theoretical concepts (Denshire 2014).
20. In writing about myself I bring the lives of others into my narrative (Wall 2008), but their actions are presented from my perspective and I must acknowledge that they may tell a very different story (Chang 2008). Personal experiences are 'shaped by a politics of representation' and hence personal experience is 'neither self-evident nor straightforward: it is always contested and always therefore political' (Denzin 2014: 36).
21. The examples chosen reflect the aims of the volume, namely to develop a spatial approach to social and political interactions in Northern Ireland.
22. Although Lisburn is now categorized as a city, it was a categorized as a town during the Troubles. As such I refer to it throughout this narrative as a town.
23. Boal and Douglas (1982) highlight that surveillance and violence were not always outwardly directed to the 'other' community but often inwardly directed within the group in order to maintain group conformity and norms, a form of what Zurawski (2005) termed 'community policing'. As examples, Boal and Douglas highlight that 'tarring and feathering' and 'kneecapping' were regular punishments for those who deviated from the prescribed community norms of behaviour, such as fraternizing with the 'enemy'.

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